(d) the steps Government have taken to popularise the scheme in tribal and rural areas of the State?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (d) There is no specific scheme for development of medicinal and aromatic plants in Bihar. However, some central Ministries/ Departments/Institutions are implementing research and development projects as well as programmes on popularisation of medicinal and aromatic plants. These include: micropropagation, development of agro-technologies, collection and conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants in herbal garden as well as generation of high quality and genetically uniform planting material. Other programmes under implementation with promising results are training and technology transfer to farmers and entrepreneurs alongwith technical advice for cultivation and processing and providing relevant literature for popularisation of medicinal and aromatic plants in Bihar. About 40 farmers have received training.

Bio-prospecting of Biological Wealth

1195. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any multi-institutional project has been initiated to catalogue and bio-prospect the biological wealth in East Himalayas and the South-Western Ghats; and

(b) if so, what are the details of this project, its financial implications and the benefits proposed to be derived from this project?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A multi-institutional (13 in number) collaborative programme on Bioprospecting of Biological Wealth has been supported by Department of Biotechnology for characterization, inventorization and conservation of Biodiversity of North Eastern Himalayas and Southern Western Ghats. The programme would help in cataloguing and characterizing the economically important species of the region. Studies on the genetic diversity of the species existing in these regions have been undertaken. The endangered plant species would be conserved and the important genes and molecules identified and characterized for potential use. The programme has started from October, 1997 with an outlay of Rs. 11.53 crores for 5 years.

Scientific Encyclopaedia Titled "THE WEALTH OF INDIA"

1196. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) under CSIR has been publishing a Scientific encyclopedia named "The Wealth of India" since 1948;

(b) whether it is also a fact that an organisation named Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD) has been collaborating with National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) in bringing out the CD-ROM version of the above publication;

(c) if so, the details of the understanding between National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) and Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD) and the legal status of Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD); and

(d) the owner of the copyright version of the CD-ROM version?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD) is a consortium of 9 organisations of which 8 are